

Advancing Sustainable Forestry Looking Forward - 21st Century Forestry

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How does 21st Century Forestry fit into the big picture future for our state, adding to the quality of life for its citizenry?

To do that, let's take ourselves forward to the year 2050, the middle of the 21st century. Washington's population will double to over 11 million people. This will be adding the equivalent of 29 cities the size of Tacoma or Spokane.

What will Washington look like with all these new people? How will we handle this growth?

What will our forestlands look like? How "healthy" will the forests be? Will they be economically viable? What ecosystem services will they provide? Will there be a market and who will pay for them? Who will own the forests? How fragmented will it be?

How will our citizenry make connections to the land and the resources? Who will be the future natural resource professionals? Where will they come from?

The children born today will be in their mid-forties..... they will not only be voters, they will be opinion leaders, policy makers and business people. What will be their values and priorities as adults and how will their personal childhood experiences influence them?

To talk about sustainable forestry, we need to put some parameters around **Sustainability** - What is it?

- For DNR, sustainability is achieved by acting to ensure our human and natural environment provides abundant and diverse social, environmental, and economic benefits for all the people of Washington, in this and future generations.
- Acting: the idea is that we will be action oriented, not passive. We also have in mind that "action" involves not just what we do and control, but that we use our influence to engender action by others as well.
- To be able to take action, we need to have a vision of our future. We need to identify a pathway to achieve that vision and we should not be afraid to be bold and ambitious.
- So here is what I have on my mind for a **Vision of Sustainable Forestry in the 21st Century**:
- It is where environmental, economic and social benefits of our working forests are interdependent, not in conflict with one another. The citizenry of Washington understands

this interdependence and acknowledges the need to sustain **all** of them to be able to sustain **any** of them. This is also the approach that Oregon is using for a dialogue on Forest Sustainability.

- I recently reread the **Timber/Fish/Wildlife Original Agreement – A Better Future in Our Woods and Streams**: It is uniquely similar...I will read an excerpt:

“They met in July of 1986, over forty individuals, representing the tribes, the environmental community, state natural resource agencies, and the timber industry. They adopted new ground rules, and results they produced are quite profound. The participants agree that the State of Washington needs a viable timber industry and it needs to protect and enhance its fish, wildlife, water and cultural resources. Further, they agreed that these needs are not mutually exclusive. They are compatible. What makes these ground rules profound is the fact that you cannot meet those needs without cooperating, trusting and plain talk. This agreement, then, is the participant’s best effort at meeting each others needs.”

- Whether we are foresters, members of environmental organizations, tribes or landowners, each of us look for many of the same things in life: clean air; clean abundant water; good jobs; a safe, healthy environment; and healthy forests.
- These are reasonable expectations; I think I can say with confidence that today these are still our common goals.

But have we achieved a **Better Future in Our Woods and Streams; the subtext of the Timber/Fish/Wildlife Agreement?**

In managing Washington’s forests, we are applying science-based stewardship with many accomplishments and outcomes for our natural resources.

- Permanent state forest practices rules have been adopted that implement the Forests & Fish Report, which has been carried out for over 5 years.
- Incidental Take Permits have been obtained from NOAA Fisheries and U.S. Fish and Wildlife; activities conducted under an approved Forest Practice Application are formally recognized as being compliant with the federal Endangered Species Act for aquatic species, Clean Water Act assurances also have been formalized.
- Under the Road Maintenance and Abandonment Planning strategy of Forest & Fish;
 - 8,400 plans have been completed covering nearly 59,000 miles of forest roads.
 - Over 1,800 miles of forest roads that are no longer needed have been properly abandoned and;
 - 1464 fish passage barriers have been repaired, opening 1011 miles of stream habitat.
 - Now that is a great accomplishment and you should all be applauded!
- Each year through “learning by doing”, we become far more experienced in our knowledge of ecosystems and how to conduct forestry practices to protect ecosystem functions.

I think we **have** achieved a better future in our woods and streams, but the real question is how we maintain and improve on that future into the 21st century?

We do it by standing on the shoulders of the giants that came before us;

- We need to stay committed, or recommit, to the collaborative framework and consensus building approach of TFW and Forest and Fish.
- We must truly understand and carry out the ground rules of TFW and hold ourselves and each other accountable to those ground rules.
- We must all stay focused on the goals of Adaptive Management and work cooperatively to ensure it is an efficient and effective scientific program to monitor and assess the forest practice rules and achievement of the desired resource objectives.
- We must work together toward our mutual goals of clean water, habitat and a viable industry, rather than the idea that each goal is a piece of the pie to be fought over. We simply cannot afford to expend our energy quarreling amongst ourselves over different ways of working toward the **same goals**.
- To remain viable in the 21st century we must create synergy – where the sum of our collective efforts is greater than our individual efforts. We create synergy by using our collective and creative energy and talents to ensure sustainable forests and sustainable forestry remains in Washington.

Earlier I expressed my vision of **Sustainable Forestry for the 21st Century**:

- Part of the vision is that the, “**The citizenry** of Washington understands the interdependence of economic, environmental and social values of the forest, and acknowledges the need to sustain **all** of them to be able to sustain **any** of them.”

There are multiple dimensions to this concept of sustaining all goals to be able to sustain any of them. For the general citizenry the interdependency of these goals are not very apparent.

This is evident as we look at the increasing rate of forest fragmentation and conversion. When we think of **land allocation and use**, I believe most in this room will agree that a well managed “working forest” is a preferable land use in Washington.

- But there is work to do in keeping forest ownership an attractive option that engenders public support and respect. Many people don’t understand or recognize the suite of benefits that a working forest provides vs. a “working development”.
- I hear from many of our small forest landowners that they just want to feel support and respect for keeping their lands in forests. As a result of sound, balanced management, they want to be acknowledged, and should be acknowledged, as good Stewards of the Land.

I also discussed **sustainability** as being achieved by acting to ensure our human and natural environment provides abundant and diverse social, environmental, and economic benefits for all the people of Washington noting that acting involves not just what we do and control, but that we use our influence to engender action by others as well.

- Together, as leaders, policy makers, business people, foresters, scientists, technicians and educators, we need to think seriously about how we can play a larger, more visible role in achieving these positive **societal** goals of sustainable forestry.
In this 21st century, we must widen our circle of synergy and create broader strategic alliances.

- We need to advocate for investment in community and urban forestry to enhance the livability of our cities. We need to think about ways, respectful of private property rights, to offer access and outdoor opportunities for people to make a connection to the land, to have a sense of place or an inspiring recreation experience.
- In his book, *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv asserts that American's experience with nature has gone from romantic attachment to electronic detachment in the last 30 years. He says, for a new generation, nature is more abstraction than reality and that many of our kids have nature deficit-disorder. These are the same children that constitute the future political constituency and their engagement, or vote, as an adult is usually based more of a foundation of personal experience than rational decision-making! Sustainable Forestry for the 21st Century needs the next generation to have a personal experience and a connection with working lands!

I'm optimistic and excited for the future of sustainable forestry in Washington. There is a good story to tell because in practicing forestry in Washington, the "me" generation has been replaced by the "we" generation. Independence has been replaced by interdependence. The real leaders are more often the champions of cooperation rather than competition. Survival of the fittest based on authoritative rule has been replaced by survival of the wisest based on understanding, participation, strategic alliances and reason with a leadership style that empowers each other so that together we can achieve our common goals.